

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A variable voice rate apparatus to control a reproduction rate of voice, comprising:

- 5 a voice data generation unit configured to generate voice data from the voice;
- a text data generation unit configured to generate text data indicating a content of the voice data;
- a division information generation unit configured to generate division information used for dividing the text data into a plurality of linguistic units each of which is characterized by a linguistic form;
- 10 a reproduction information generation unit configured to generate reproduction information set for each of the linguistic units; and
- 15 a voice reproduction controller which controls reproduction of each of the linguistic units, based on the reproduction information and the division information.

20 2. The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a first storage which stores the reproduction information,

 wherein the voice reproduction controller acquires the reproduction information and controls reproduction of each of the linguistic units.

25 3. The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a first storage which stores the reproduction information, and a second

storage which stores the voice data and the division information,

wherein the voice reproduction controller generates a voice signal corresponding to each of the linguistic units of the voice data stored in the second storage, based on the reproduction information and the division information.

4. The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the text data generation unit includes:

a speaker which outputs, to an operator, voice corresponding to the voice data; and

a text acceptance unit configured to accept input of text data corresponding to the voice in accordance with an operation of the operator.

5. The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a reception unit configured to receive information related to reproduction speed of the text data,

wherein the reproduction information generation unit generates, as the reproduction information, received information.

6. The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim 1, wherein:

the reproduction information generation unit generates, as the reproduction information, information corresponding to each of the linguistic units; and

the voice reproduction controller determines a reproduction time of each of the linguistic units, based on the reproduction information and the division information, and controls reproduction of each of the linguistic units in the reproduction time.

7. The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim 6, wherein:

the division information generation unit generates division information used for dividing the text data into a plurality of the linguistic units corresponding to a word class;

the reproduction information generation unit generates, as the reproduction information, weighting information corresponding to each of the linguistic units; and

the voice reproduction controller determines the reproduction time based on the weighting information and the division information, the voice reproduction controller controlling each of the linguistic units to reproduce each of the linguistic units in a determined reproduction time.

8. The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the reproduction information generation unit selects to-be-reproduced linguistic units from the linguistic units, based on the reproduction information and the division information, selected linguistic units being controlled

independently to each other in reproduction.

9. The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim 1, wherein:

5 the reproduction information generation unit
generates a value of M (M is a positive integer) as the
reproduction information; and

10 the voice reproduction controller selects to-be-
reproduced every M-th linguistic unit from the
linguistic units, based on the reproduction information
and the division information, and controls selected
15 linguistic units independently to each other in
reproduction.

10. The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim 1, wherein:

15 the reproduction information generation unit
generates a string of characters as the reproduction
information; and

20 the voice reproduction controller selects, from
the linguistic units, to-be-reproduced linguistic units
each of which contains the string of characters, based
on the reproduction information and the division
information, and controls selected linguistic units
independently to each other in reproduction.

25 11. The variable voice rate apparatus according to
claim 10, wherein:

 the reproduction information generation unit
further generates a value of N (N is a positive

integer) as the reproduction information; and

the voice reproduction controller selects, from
the linguistic units, to-be-reproduced linguistic units
each of which contains N or more character strings
5 indicating the reproduction information, selected
linguistic units being controlled independently to each
other in reproduction.

12. The variable voice rate apparatus according to
claim 1, wherein:

10 the reproduction information generation unit
generates, as the reproduction information, first
information indicating a string of characters, and
second information indicating a level of priority and
corresponding to the first information; and

15 the voice reproduction controller selects, from
the linguistic units by priority, linguistic units each
of which contains a string of characters having a
higher priority level than a priority level, based on
the reproduction information and the division
20 information, and controls selected linguistic units
independently to each other in reproduction.

13. The variable voice rate apparatus according to
claim 12, further comprising a detection unit
configured to detect each time for reproducing each of
25 the linguistic units,

wherein the voice reproduction controller selects,
from the linguistic units by priority, linguistic units

each of which contains a string of characters having a higher level of priority than a priority level, based on the reproduction information and the division information, a total time for reproducing the linguistic units each of which contains the string of characters being not more than a preset time, and controls selected linguistic units independently to each other in reproduction.

14. The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim 1, wherein:

the reproduction information generation unit generates, as the reproduction information, information indicating a probability with which preset ones of the linguistic units are combined in a preset order; and

the voice reproduction controller selects, from the linguistic units, combinations of linguistic units each having a probability lower than a preset value, selected combinations of linguistic units being controlled independently to each other in reproduction.

15. The variable voice rate apparatus according to claim 14, further comprising a detection unit configured to detect a time for reproducing each of the units,

wherein the voice reproduction controller selects, from the linguistic units, combinations of linguistic units each having a probability lower than the preset value, based on the reproduction information and the

division information, a total time for reproducing
selected combinations of linguistic units being not
more than a preset time, selected combinations of
linguistic units being controlled independently to each
5 other in reproduction.

16. A variable voice rate apparatus to control a
reproduction rate of voice, comprising:

a reproduction information generation unit
configured to generate reproduction information, the
10 reproduction information being set for each of a
plurality of linguistic units into which voice data is
divided, each of the linguistic units being
characterized by a linguistic form; and

a voice reproduction controller which controls
15 reproduction of each of the linguistic units, based on
the reproduction information and division information
which is used for dividing the voice data into the
linguistic units.

17. A variable voice rate method of controlling a
20 reproduction rate of voice, comprising:

generating voice data from the voice;
generating text data indicating a content of the
voice data;

generating division information used for dividing
25 the text data into a plurality of linguistic units each
of which is characterized by a linguistic form;

generating reproduction information set for each

of the linguistic units; and

controlling reproduction of each of the linguistic units, based on the reproduction information and the division information.